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The Need for An Adviser

The principal question raised by the resignation of McGeorge Bundy, President Johnson's special assistant for national security affairs, is whether he will be replaced by Secretary of Defense McNamara—or whether he will be replaced at all.

Mr. Johnson hasn't said, but there are hints. When reporters asked White House Press Secretary Moyers whether the post held by Mr. Bundy would be filled, Mr. Moyers replied that Mr. Bundy's resignation would not become effective until the end of February; and he also said that Mr. Johnson would be in touch with increasing frequency with Cabinet members.

This could mean that Mr. Johnson intends to eliminate Mr. Bundy's position, or it could mean that he intends to fill it but hopes to sidetrack speculation about an appointee. Mr. Johnson wants all news to originate from official sources, preferably himself.

So the rumors that Mr. McNamara will be moved from the Pentagon to the White House might have the effect of blocking the appointment, if indeed it was contemplated. But whether it is Mr. McNamara or another person, the post ought to be filled.

Someone in the White House, other than Mr. Johnson, should have the responsibility of sifting and evaluating the recommendations of the State Department, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency, each of which has its own special interest to promote, and be in a position to offer the President independent advice.

It would be a mistake for Mr. Johnson to try to perform this function himself, through personal contact with the heads of the three agencies. He should have a competent and loyal adviser with a staff. It is not necessary to indorse the views of Mr. Bundy—or Mr. McNamara—to urge that the President fill this position.

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